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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001356

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/28/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: PALESTINIANS CRITICIZE GOI PLANNING PROCESS IN
AREA C VILLAGES

REF: JERUSALEM 1174

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. In a series of meetings with PolOffs, Palestinians and NGO representatives were uniformly critical of the GOI's planning process for Area C villages. All contacts criticized the GOI initiative to create master plans for several villages in Area C as an opaque process that will stifle growth and not provide for public infrastructure. Most villages indicated they are not aware of details of the GOI's plans. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) is planning legal action on residents' behalf. End summary.

Village Heads, NGO Planners/Advocates
Criticize GOI's Proposed Plans

12. (C) In late June and early July, Poloffs met with representatives of eight villages (Ti'inik, Dhaher al-Abd, Akkaba, Umm al-Rihan, Bayt Sahur (Jabel Harasa), al-Shaykh West (al-Shawawra), Jurat al-Sham'a, and Idhna), and NGOs and international organizations concerned with planning issues in Area C (Jerusalem Legal Aid Center (JLAC), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), ACRI, and Bimkom). These contacts all criticized the GOI Civil Administration's planning process in Area C. (Note: The GOI informed the USG and Quartet Envoy Blair earlier this year of its initiative to introduce master plans for Area C villages. Following a March 30 trilateral meeting the State Department spokesman issues a statement that indicated that the GOI had approved master plans for 25 Palestinian villages in Area C. End note.) Village representatives noted that they were not included in the Civil Administration planning process.

Villages Not Involved In, Usually Unaware of
Israel Civil Administration Planning Process

13. (C) Most of the mayors and village representatives PolOffs spoke with were unaware that the Civil Administration was finalizing master plans for their villages. When shown copies of the proposed master plans, villagers told Poloffs either that they had never seen the map and were unaware a master plan was being prepared, or that they had seen the "new" proposed map years before and rejected it. Specific complaints included:
-- Several villages complained they did not receive timely notice of the process. In Umm al-Rihan, the mayor said he learned second-hand that a public notice was published in Hebrew in Ha'aretz, not in a place likely to be seen by residents;
-- Residents of Umm al-Rihan told Poloffs that the map closely resembled a plan for which they previously received verbal approval, but with different limits drawn much closer

to existing structures;

-- In Dhaher al-Abd, residents told Poloffs that they were aware of completed plans dating to 2005, but were uncertain as to the exact boundaries because they never received an official map.

-- Residents of Akkaba had a copy of the map, but complained to Poloffs that 20 of the village's 70 houses were left outside the plan. (Note: Akkaba is not the same village as al-Aqabah, which Post has previously reported on in Reftel. End note.)

Civil Administration Controls Planning Process

14. (C) Bimkom architect Alon Cohen-Lifshitz told Poloff July 23 that planning for Israeli-controlled parts of the West Bank is handled by the Civil Administration's Higher Planning Council at Beit El, which has no Palestinian representation. Sa'ad Abd al-Haq, a field worker for UN OCHA, told Poloff June 27 that Palestinians who appeal to Beit El and submit their own master plans are subject to "harassment" by the bureaucracy. He cited a case where an application requiring 20 copies of a map was rejected because the maps were rolled instead of folded. NGO architects and planners told Poloff that they consider the Civil Administration plans sloppy and technically deficient.

What Happens Next? Heightened Fears of Demolition

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15. (C) Most of the village councils told Poloffs that they are concerned about the fate of structures left outside the Civil Administration's planning boundaries. Many villages own structures outside these plans' boundaries with stop work or demolition orders pending. Cohen-Lifshitz of Bimkom said "the fact that there is a plan for a village creates a very good background for them to issue demolition orders for houses outside the plan." Bimkom is preparing a report on Area C planning including case studies of several of the 27 villages with GOI-published plans. Both ACRI and Bimkom indicated they intend to file petitions to the Israeli High Court of Justice (HCJ) for at least a handful of test cases, and ACRI will seek a ruling that settlers and Palestinians must receive equal treatment.

WALLES